

Amph.
H.Mbd.
S.



THE RUHR PROBLEM

An Independent Rhineland-Westphalia

Lecture delivered in February, 1923, at Angers, Nantes,
Lorient, Saint-Nazaire and La Roche-sur-Yon

by

M. Maurice SCHWOB

Editor of the "*du Phare de la Loire*"

Third rimpression
(13th thousand)

NANTES

12, Place du Commerce

1923





+ Louis Rarmarkers —

*Why our soldiers are in the Ruhr, my child? To save
you from becoming a widow like your mother.*

THE RUHR PROBLEM

An Independent Rhineland-Westphalia

Lecture delivered in February, 1923, at Angers, Nantes,
Lorient, Saint-Nazaire and La Roche-sur-Yon

by

M. Maurice SCHWOB

Editor of the "*du Phare de la Loire*."

Third rimpression

(13th thousand)

NANTES

Imprimerie du Commerce

1923

TO MY ENGLISH READERS :

The Ruhr and the Rhine are the eternal bones of contention, and he who has them dreams immediately of becoming **top dog**.

So let us make them common property : it is the only way to lift the fatal ban.

England, who has never tolerated any **top dog** in Europe and has always fought each of them to a finish and at any cost, ought to be the first alive to such a truth.

It is full time to **lay the ghost** of Europe's haunted house.

M. S.

The Ruhr Problem

AN INDEPENDENT RHINELAND-WESTPHALIA

The Ruhr problem is the problem of reparations and the problem of France's security. I will endeavour to demonstrate that these two cognate problems cannot be solved outside the Ruhr.

How, in the past, were victorious nations accustomed to settle this double question ?

In the days of antiquity, war contributions were settled by the confiscation of the public and private treasure of the defeated party and by the complete seizure of his gold and precious objects.

They were completed, in addition to ensuring the victor's safeguards, by the violent annexation of enemy territory and, if need be, by the reduction of whole sections of the population to a state of slavery.

In more recent times and up to 1871, which marks the transition to new days, the method employed remained the same, with this difference alone that, slavery being no longer officially tolerated and the quantity of precious metals and jewels being insufficient to pay the growing indemnities, recourse was had to *credit*, and payment was stipulated in bonds and in various securities endorsed by third parties who were recognised as solvent, — what are known to-day as « foreign securities ».

Former settlements of accounts and methods applied.

I stated a moment ago that the year 1870 marked the beginning of a new era. Germany did not realise this and applied the old-fashioned formulae to the full.

She tore away two panting provinces which she brutalised and martyred for half a century without subduing them. She did not hesitate to create in the west another Posnania, the counterpart of her German Poland and equally irreconcilable. She gave no thought to that immanent justice which demands that crime shall be punished, nor did she stop to think that a series of new crimes leads to the most terrible retribution.

She also sought to apply the other part of the old formula. She demanded the payment of five milliards in gold or in international securities. We French were rich ; we honoured our signature ; we were in haste to free our territory, the occupation of which was by no means so gentle as is our occupation of the Rhine to-day. We therefore attempted the impossible, and, at the risk of ruining ourselves, we managed, in a little more than two years, to pay what was then an enormous sum. An unforeseen phenomenon resulted : Germany, receiving this sudden influx of gold and international securities, underwent a grave crisis.

Like an abundant transfusion of blood from one being to another without the taking of proper precautions, the clumsy transfer from one nation to another of milliards of money can cause the most redoubtable accidents. The passage of this wealth into circulation caused such an excess of pressure, such a rise in prices, that Germany, was only able to overcome it by urgently setting aside a part of France's gold as « war treasure ».

Thus was it seen, as early as 1870, that five milliards of francs could not be *effectively* transferred from one country to another without the receiver... receiving at the same time a heavy blow.

More recently the United States perceived that the absorption in the course of a few years of some fifteen milliards of gold caused a rupture of equilibrium, painful unemployment and the closing of markets, of such a nature

as to prove that too-heavily gilded obverses may have deplorable reverses.

Yet the problem of France's reparations would necessitate a transfer twenty to twenty-five times greater than that exacted by Germany in 1870.

Is such a transfer possible by the methods in use up to 1870 ?

First of all, *we do not wish* to conquer territory by force nor to attempt to enslave its inhabitants. Both our honesty and our common sense preclude such an idea.

Secondly, even if she wished to pay — *and she does not* — Germany possesses neither the quantities of gold nor of foreign securities to liquidate her debt. It is unquestionable that the debt is a sacred one and that it represents but a portion of the damage done; but *normal means of payment by the old methods are lacking*.

New methods must therefore be found.

The first method that occurs to mind is *payment in kind*, the annual making over of a quantity of goods. This would spell *industrial ruin* to the party receiving it. It would mean competition with national industries and unemployment in one's own territory; or, if this rubbish were exported at low prices so as to convert it into cash, it would sound the death-knell of one's own export trade.

Can other financial methods be applied ?

It might have been possible to have made wider use of payments in kind for the restoration of the devastated regions, but complex causes, due to a large extent to French suspicion and German illwill, led to the failure of this scheme. Payments in kind are reduced therefore to certain raw materials and to a certain supply of labour and of goods prudently selected and limited. They can only be a very limited solution.

An export tax in our favour on the whole of German exports has also been suggested and even tried. But this pre-supposes:

- (1) Good faith on the part of the exporter.
- (2) German docility for thirty years or more.

(3) Goodwill on the part of the whole world in agreeing to receive an excess of German production in order that we may be paid.

The mere mention of these conditions is their own condemnation.

Finally a share in all the great German industries was thought of.

This also takes for granted good faith and goodwill, — that is to say the opposite to what really exists.

Control would be impossible on German territory and under German legislation.

I shall point out later how big industry in Germany has taken good care to put its foreign reserves out of reach by means of innumerable banking ramifications and to escape all effective control by means of cunning, occult managements under the name of *Konzern* embracing every branch of human activity either hidden or avowed.

Thus it is materially impossible to evolve a sharing system on German territory and under German legislation, and it is quite certain that the hypothetical return would be negligible in relation to the actual debt.

In short, payment in cash, like payment in kind, is impracticable except for a relatively small part of the sums due. As for deferred payments over a long period, they pre-suppose good faith and goodwill which are equally inexistent, and, for a long time to come, owing to German *self-sabotage*, they could represent but a small part of the total debt.

In view of the fact that the effective transfer of such colossal sums is impossible, there remains but one method — that which accountants call settlement by balancing accounts.

The only possible settlement.

If we were dealing with an honest debtor prepared to honour his signature, we could transfer to him the burden of our reparation loans, our Credit National and other bonds. This would mean a simple transfer of debt to him, and it is quite obvious that sixty million Germans would be better able to assume the burden than forty million Frenchmen.

Unfortunately such a promise would be worth just as much as the notorious A, B and C bonds of the Treaty of Versailles — that is to say so many scraps of paper.

What then can we write down to Germany's credit ? What can she give us on the spot that may be valued financially and that represents many milliards ?

Our security.

But you will ask me : If you have no confidence in German goodwill and good faith, how can you obtain a security expressible in terms of money — that is to say a security that will allow you to disarm and liberate in favour of the economic service of the country your young men absorbed by compulsory military service ? The security given by an eighteen months term of military service, by mounting guard on the Rhine and by the seizure of pledges is a ruinous security which must be entered on the debit and not on the credit side of Germany's account. What treaty will give you the other security ? Is it the notorious stillborn Anglo-American pact ?

Certainly not. Our Allies would arrive on the scene too late, and we should be strangled while they were still deliberating. Furthermore we should risk paying for this eventual aid rather dearly ; the experience of the past is by no means reassuring.

I will not waste time with Germany's « word of honour »; our credulity has its limits.

What we want then are *material guarantees* which will give us *absolute security without costing us anything*. We could thus solve the dual problem which I enunciated at the outset.

Do such guarantees exist ?

They are to be found in the Rhine valley.

The need for internationalisation.

Where is the critical point in Europe ? In the Rhine valley : a real cyclonic centre in the history of our storms.

Do what we may we shall never get away from the Rhine question, which has faced us since the time of Cæsar, and probably before his day — did we know anything of prehistory.

Cæsar's mistake was to think that the Rhine was a bulwark, the possession of which ensured the security of its holder.

A German Rhine or a Gallic Rhine ? Twenty centuries of warfare seem to have proved that neither solution is of any use.

Should then the Rhine be neither rival's property ? Should the Rhine belong to small semi-independent States sandwiched in between powerful neighbours ? The history of the old Electorates shows the futility of such a solution.

The Rhine therefore must be everyman's land. What formerly seemed an Utopia has become practical since the foundation of the League of Nations.

Unfortunately the League of Nations is still a soul without body; it will only have a real existence once it is *incarnated*.

The body it must animate, and which finally will be a safeguard for us all, is the *region of the Rhine*.

But we must revert to M. Bourgeois' ideas concerning

the League of Nations. He desired an armed league so as to ensure the respect of its judgments; he wanted it to have its own financial organisation. This pre-supposes a complete house : Geneva is only a furnished flat.

If the League is to be respected, it must be in its own home.

When you raise a fire-brigade you give it equipment and you barrack it as close as possible to the danger zone.

But nothing of the kind has been done for the League of Nations.

Give it an army, station it on the Rhine in the very heart of the fire zone.

Once this is done, we can scrap all our costly private fire-brigades and send back all our firemen to the farm or the workshop where hands are so badly lacking.

But the Rhine valley in its restricted limits is no longer sufficient. We are no longer in the days of Cæsar. The industrialisation of the world has changed everything. To the Rhine valley properly so-called we must adjoin its affluent, the Ruhr, *the black country*.

The left bank of the Rhine alone is a bastard and futile solution. To the Rhineland must be joined Westphalia, the Westphalia of the mines, the Westphalia of Krupp, the birthland of the « Konzerns ».

The Rhineland and the Ruhr — here is where the League of Nations should elect its capital and station its police force.

It is the centre and source of all power ; it is the factory that manufactures anything ; it is the lump of coal whose possession ensures everything ; it is the pledge on which could be based, if need be, an international currency that would liquidate the German *financial* indemnity. It is worth more than all the gold reserves in the world.

It is above all a moral guarantee against the folly of nations. He who holds Westphalia wants all the Rhine,

its mouth as well as its source. Westphalia engenders the *Rhineland ambition*, which leads to *world ambition*.

No annexations

The « lump of coal » is a bad counsellor. It creates the craving for iron and all the metals ; the thirst for cotton and for all raw material ; the desire to dominate countries overseas so as to drain their raw materials ; the wish to control every civilised country in order to sell manufactured goods. Famine and excess ! The country that controls Westphalia is haunted by these two spectres : famine if it has not the wherewithal to manufacture ; excess if it does not know where to send what it has manufactured. It « sees red » therefore whenever it perceives a real or an imaginary barrier.

We must not seek elsewhere for the deep causes of the war of 1914 — that is to say the crisis of Prussian madness. For this reason, we must beware of the agitation of certain shortsighted patriots who declare :

« Since German bad faith has given us the opportunity to remedy the mistake of the premature armistice of 1918 and the egregious errors of the Treaty of Versailles, since Germany's default has given us the right to seize the Ruhr, let us keep it. Here is, at last, the indemnity we shall never cash otherwise. We hold it in the hollow of our hand; let us close our fist upon it. »

No, we must not revert to the disgraceful methods I spoke of at the outset. No conquest of irredentist provinces, no enslavement, no violence that provokes still worse forms of violence in the future.

First of all, supposing that we succeeded in overcoming all the tremendous internal opposition we should encounter; supposing that we succeeded in controlling that formidable instrument whose complexity is disconcerting; supposing we managed to utilise it normally without the help of those who built it bit by bit and who know every cog of its

intricate machinery. Would the rest of the world accept the situation ?

By holding in our hands the Lorraine and Westphalo-Rhenish metal trade and the coal mines of the Sarre and the Ruhr we should become the iron and steel kings. By controlling all the works of the Badische Soda und Anilin Gesellschaft we should be the masters of explosives. Does anyone imagine that the British could be expected to tolerate such a hegemony and that other nations would not be anxious, and very reasonably so ?

More powerful than ever the Germans were, we should become a greater danger than they to the public peace. No matter how filled with good intentions we may be, we could not resist — no collection of human beings in the world could resist it — the temptation to dominate the world.

The Ruhr and the left bank of the Rhine represent in coal and lignite one-half of the total English production, with the possibility of equalling and even overtaking this production, since the known reserves of Westphalia are far greater than the British reserves.

Such a state of affairs would mean the inevitable folly of imperialism. A look at the concentrative movement at present going on in German industrial organisation is enough to realise its fatal trend towards world domination.

The time is past of obsolete *trusts* and *cartels*, « vertical » or « horizontal », federations of industries ranging from the extraction and transport of raw materials to the distribution of manufactured goods, or associations taking over all the industries of one type in a country.

The Konzerns.

The *Konzern* is now the adopted formula. The Konzern is an octopus that spreads its tentacles *in every direction*, oblique as well as vertical or horizontal; its formidable tentacles touch everything, grip and envelop everything, suck everything with their powerful suckers.

The Stinnes Konzern dominates hundreds of huge businesses — mines, metallurgy, railways, canals, coast-wise and overseas steamship lines, pharmaceutical, tinctorial and agricultural chemistry (all leading to the chemistry of explosives), oil and various fuels, machine construction, steamship and airship yards, forests, cellulose, paper, newspapers, colossal bookprinting and propaganda, world-wide publicity; electrical works, tramways, gasworks, waterworks, drainage and street cleaning (which permit the Konzern to control the public services); agricultural concessions and stock-raising enterprises which give an opening into new countries; public works permitting to gain a foothold everywhere; aerial transports flying over all places; experimental societies leaving no branch of human activity unexplored so that discoveries may be seized upon immediately; giant business consortiums, and, dominating the whole, linking the whole together, *buying everything*, consciences included if necessary, a banking organisation whose unsuspected ramifications extend even to rivals in rival countries, paralysing and rotting them.

Stinnes is at the head of the largest of the Konzerns, but there are quantities of others, some of them just as important and often friends and allies. The most notable are Thyssen, Kirdorf, Kloeckner, Stumm, Roechling, Otto Wolf, Krupp, Haniel, Hoesch, Henschel, Rombacher Huttenwerke, Sichel and finally the A. E. G. of the late Herr Rathenau, the only Konzern, I believe, not born in the Ruhr or the Rhineland.

This impressive enumeration, all details of which will be found in the report of his mission drawn up by M. L. Coupaye, a leading engineer of the French naval ordnance service (Dunod publisher) represents but a small part of the whole: the visible part.

Hidden in the background is the Anilin consortium, which centres around the « Badische », of Ludwigshafen. There is also, more intentionally hidden away, the Explosives Consortium, which is crystallised around the Rheinische Dynamitfabrik, of Cologne. All sorts of things are

manufactured by it, even *artificial cotton* made from wool, which, it appears, was discovered by a branch of the « Dynamit ».

All these plants swarm in the Ruhr and on the banks of the Rhine. They branch afar, but the « kernel », from which they sprung, is there. We must remove this kernel from German control.

We do not want to kill Germany but to render her powerless for evil. Nor do we wish to swallow ourselves the kernel and get poisoned with « Prussic » acid.

What we justly want to do is to neutralise it, making it inoffensive first of all and afterwards useful to the whole world.

*Deprussification
will solve all
the problems.*

Such is the result that could be obtained by the creation of an autonomous Rhineland-Westphalia state under the protection of the League of Nations established at Cologne, in the very heart of the position.

So far as we are concerned, it means the liberation of our metallurgical industry.

In the east, and the west of France also, we have huge deposits of iron, but we are badly off for coal. Our French smelting works, which are constructed above the deposits of *mineral*, use the latter as a means of exchange with the Westphalian smelting works, which are constructed above the *coal* deposits.

If French smelting works were compelled to *buy* the coal they need, instead of *exchanging* it for their excess of mineral, they could not live.

Thus it was that Krupp cast his guns with the celebrated *minette* from the east of France and with iron ore from the west. Can we allow this to continue? Is French industry to be faced with the alternative of providing arms for the enemy or rendering its own existence impossible? Is it compelled to choose between suicide and treachery?

I pray the reader to keep in mind that the League of Nations would be able to employ against a too « warlike »

French metallurgical industry effective means of action by limiting its supply of coke for smelting.

The danger of war would therefore be infinitesimal and the settlement of reparations would become easy. The annual saving which France would effect in her military expenditure, together with the plus-value resulting from the security of business, would be over three billions of paper francs. This annuity, set to Germany's credit, represents at 5 per cent a capital of about twenty billions gold marks in reduction of her debt.

We should be inclined to place also to her credit any per-equation of inter-allied debts.

Germany then could no longer pretend that the task of paying up was beyond her strength.

She could be compelled to settle her account by payments easily practicable in international values and by a *large participation in Rhenish-Westphalian industries* — railways, mines, metallurgy, chemistry, textiles, in short what can be called *the key industries of the war*. The day these industries are shared in proper proportions by German, French, Belgian, Italian and British participants, *rendering any tyrannical majority impossible*, Rheno-Westphalia will be internationalised *effectively*, economically as well as politically.

Precautions would have to be taken to prevent *occult control*. The Konzerns appear to have foreseen a demand for participation, and they have prepared to meet the danger by the creation of *management shares neither transferable nor negotiable*, in limited number. Thus even large nominal amounts of capital might have an illusory control. The distribution of such shares ought to be most carefully checked. *The internationalisation must be complete*. Honest, hard-working Germany will lose nothing thereby, and there is no question of preventing her from having her share of the products of the Ruhr in the same way as ourselves. The Sarre quarrel could be settled in a

similar fashion by international control, France's needs being equably met.

From that moment every problem would be simplified and every anxiety would be calmed.

For instance, at the present moment there is an « Antwerp question ». Antwerp requires a hinterland. If this hinterland is to be a German Westphalia, the great Belgian port will again fall under Teutonic economic domination — and we know where that leads to. If Antwerp is to find another hinterland, it can only be in the *east of France* to the detriment of the *French* ports of Havre and Dunkirk. If we abet such a thing we shall be sacrificing our own interest; if we oppose it we shall be imperilling our security by throwing our friends into the arms of our enemies.

The only way out is internationalisation of the Rhineland.

Rotterdam, as well as Antwerp, will be freed from the German yoke if the Rhineland and the Ruhr are internationalised.

Switzerland wants a free Rhine. Our solution will ensure it to her.

Holland wants to breathe freely and be ridden of the incubus. The internationalisation of the Rhine will deliver her from it.

Italy is a slave to coal. Germany made her realise that fact before the war. A proper share of the coal from an internationalised Ruhr would make Rome free and friend of everyone, London as well as Berlin.

The *taking-over* of Westphalia and the Rhine by the League of Nations would solve all these problems and others yet. The river Rhine will not be free so long as the nations bordering it are able to launch their gunboats upon its waters. It will be free, however, if it is patrolled by a flotilla flying the international flag.

We need an *international flag*, and it can only exist if there is an *international domain*, an *international capital* and.... *international citizens*.

In this case, the Westphalians would be the first « international citizens », and we can rest assured that in order to enjoy this privilege they will heartily renounce Prussian citizenship. We need not fear interfering with their « free determination ».

Do not let us judge them by their present attitude. They are afraid of future Prussian reprisals against which our weakness and wobbling during the past three years have given them no guarantee.

The objections.

But what will Great Britain have to say ? Let us neglect for the moment a certain number of rabid speculators who do not represent the real sentiments of the British nation, and let us consider only the real business leaders and their army of workers who may fear to find Rhenish-Westphalia a redoubtable competitor to their own coal and metal export trade.

It will be easy to make them understand — because they are of good faith — that a German Ruhr in the hands of its present exploiters, who profit by the fall in value of the mark to pay their workmen starvation wages and to sell everything *below its real cost*, will be an infinitely more ruinous competitor in the world's markets because it is a dishonest competitor.

These arguments will be understood. A proof is provided in the recently published letter by the great British metallurgist Mr. Ritchie who affirms that the *real business leaders*, his colleagues, think like himself and like us. They understand that the Ruhr and the Rhineland of the Konzern and of dumping are the gravest cause of unrest for world trade. More recently still the four delegates of the Labour Party, on their return from the Ruhr, proposed a solution which differs from ours only in so far as it is a temporary instead of being a definite one closing the door to all future complications.

The Ruhr and the Rhineland under the control of the

League of Nations, applying the rules of the International Labour Bureau, would be *regulators* in world prices both of labour and of goods offered for sale. They would be at the head of social progress, and if the Socialists opposed the introduction into these regions of an international regime they would merely show that all their doctrine was nothing but lying verbiage and phraseology hiding suspicious alliances.

As for the pacifists who refused to back France in advancing such a scheme, their pretended pacifism would be shown as a mask « made in Germany ».

No serious objection can therefore be raised, and Great Britain, if she persisted in an opposition which would upset the whole scheme, would run two risks:

Either Germany, camouflaging her real intentions, would seek to constitute a sort of Continental pact grouped around the Ruhr and directed against British hegemony in coal, cotton and minerals ;

Or, what is more probable, Germany, taking advantage of Allied divisions, would save the situation — that is to say, would keep for herself the Ruhr and the Rhine, the cradles in which the Konzern, the future ogres of the world, were born. Then God help us all, and Britain first and foremost !

The process of the evolution of the Konzerns is plain to any perspicacious observer. Lamprecht, the famous German historian, who was our bitter enemy during the war, writes gleefully :

« A series of indications announces that a new order of things is imminent. »

What is this new order of things ? The substitution of the Konzern to free enterprise. Then, as the final stage, State control.

*The danger...
and the salva-
tion.*

Do not rejoice too soon, misguided Socialists ! It will not be the State who will devour the Konzerns, *but quite the contrary* : State control means, in that case, control of the State by the Konzerns. Stinnes, head of the amalgamated Konzerns, may well say, more truly than ever did Louis XIV: « *L'Etat c'est moi*. I am the State ».

Master of the most formidable industrial, fluvial, railway and maritime organisation, camped in the heart of Europe on his imperishable heap of coal, having militarised his labour army in the way Prussia knows how to militarise everything, the economic Emperor will not miss his chance like the puppet Emperor of 1914. He will know how to use the tool he has so carefully forged. *And that tool is, even now, being forged in the Ruhr.*

The opportunity to save the world will never occur again. We missed it at Versailles, because whilst some of us were up in the clouds, others were unable to lift themselves above pressing but narrow interests. Germany's mad bravado, however, has re-opened the whole question. This is the last chance ; after this it will be too late.

Let us bring the United States of America to understand that the Rhine provinces are the centre around which the United States of Europe will crystallise. Let us try, in accordance with the words of the Academician Maurice Donnay, to discover the soul of this America, as unknown to us as was its unexplored land four centuries ago. Let us understand how it is that the loftiest ideal is mixed with the keenest practical sense.

Let us point out the danger and the remedy. We shall be better understood overseas if we speak plainly.

We are in a position to make ourselves heard, since the error of the armistice is repaired. We represent at the moment undisputed and indisputable Force. Let us profit by the fact to establish Reason and nothing else.

Let us upset at one blow all the charges of imperialism and militarism. We *hold* the Rhine provinces, and all we wish to do is to *free* them. We *have* the most powerful

army in the world, and all we seek to do is to *disband* it.

Our only object is to kill Fear, which paralyses everything.

We can only do this by suppressing every cause of fear.

Europe will always go in fear so long as anybody holds the Rhine and the Ruhr. Let us give this property to a co-operative society. Only by installing the League of Nations in Charlemagne's ancient abode shall we rid people of the idea of resuscitating his empire.

Around a free Rhineland and a free Ruhr fraternal conventions will group a free Belgium, a free Switzerland and a free Holland. Others will follow.

Little by little the idea of the United States of the World will gain ground. But the seed must be sown. The land is there. Requisition Westphalia. Let us oppose the radiant reality of a Rhine Peace to Stinnes' efforts to resuscitate the frightful bloody legend of the Rheingold.

Post-Script

Nantes, April 14, 1923.

Gradually the idea of the internationalisation of the Rhine and the Ruhr is gaining ground.

The Anglo-Saxons no longer seem to be so distant.

America understands that such a creation would be the centre around which would assemble, slowly perhaps but surely, the United States of Europe. The same men who are adverse to a League of Nations by which the American

Republic could be mixed up in the squabbles of the old Continent would view with pleasure a *League restricted to its European members* taking in hand the effective control of Rhenish-Westphalian neutrality.

Thus the chief objection raised in France by many sane people would disappear. I have been told:

« Your solution is an attractive one, but only on condition that in the control of Rhenish-Westphalian neutrality Guatemala and Persia for example shall not have the same voice as France ; on condition also that Great Britain, thanks to her Dominions, does not have six votes to our one. As it stands at present, the League of Nations is inadequate to the task you wish it to assume. »

The same objection would not hold if the General League of Nations gave a *mandate* to its European members alone to organise an *international regime* on the Rhine and the Ruhr. Many objections would disappear in France and American criticism might be dissipated. Perhaps some day the rational solution of a League of Nations for each of the five Continents, with a General League in which the delegates of the five Leagues will discuss world affairs, may be reached. But this is another question. What we are immediately concerned with is the internationalisation of the Ruhr and the Rhineland.

British opposition to this solution appears to be dying down. Although such a combination destroys the hopes of certain consortiums, both the real British capitalists and British Labour are beginning to perceive that an internationalised Ruhr would be an honest and loyal competitor with British industry, whilst a Ruhr in the hands of the Konzern is a weapon for economic warfare pending its transformation into a military weapon.

As for the politicians, the real ones, those with the « tradition », they know that Britain has always fought for « European equilibrium » — that is to say to prevent any single nation from becoming master of the Continent. This is the permanent basis of the time-honoured policy of Great Britain. However, in the present state of human

industry, the nation that possesses the Ruhr and the Rhine is master « in the matter of strength » and will not resist the temptation to become *effective master*. Britain's traditional policy, therefore, commands her to manœuvre so that the Ruhr and the Rhine shall be common property — that is to say, shall be *internationalised*.

Germany, if certain rumours are to be believed, is herself inclined towards a compromise. Is not this disquieting? *Timeo Germanos et dona ferentes*.

However hard the sacrifice, German « big industry » (*Schwere Industrie*) seems to be resigned to it *for fear of worse*. This is the danger I wish to dwell upon.

Whilst we are disposed to reduce our claims and *to make monetary sacrifices in order to purchase our security*, the German magnates are disposed on their part to increase their offers, *to make monetary sacrifices in order to purchase their freedom for revenge preparation*.

The real danger is that we may find ourselves faced with *acceptable* offers so far as reparations are concerned but *illusory* guarantees as regards our security. Germany will offer us the shadow in order to reserve the opportunity of seizing the prey.

All the milliards — whether they be in actual coin or in dollars, which are worth the gold they represent since all the gold is in Yankee coffers — will be but a shadow if we cannot get to work again ; if we still fear the worst ; if our factories, only just rebuilt, are liable to be destroyed again ; if our young generation can again be « bled white » ; if Continental France may again be robbed wholesale ; if our Colonial possessions may be filched from us just as they are demonstrating their value.

Such milliards, given to-day to be taken back to-morrow, would be merely so much « dope » to keep us slumber-

ing whilst the weapon of revenge was being *forged* in the Ruhr.

Demilitarisation, autonomy « within the boundaries of the Reich » would be mere camouflage if the German Konzern were allowed to remain masters of the coal, the iron and the explosives.

The key of the situation is not merely the key of the safe ; it is the key to the factories of Stinnes, Krupp and Co.

I hope I make myself clear. When I demand that the French and Belgian Governments should exact guarantees of security as well as of payment before relaxing their grip, I have no afterthought of « imperialism ».

We contemplate no conquest. We think only of peacefully putting in value our own home and colonial possessions. This is what we had begun to do even during the war. We do not dream of destruction but of construction.

In order that we may devote all our strength to a task that will benefit the whole world we want peace assured.

But peace is impossible so long as the Forge of War remains at work at our side.

The disproportion of population and our falling birth rate render our position precarious enough. If, in addition, we are crushed in advance by the handicap of armament, Germany, *putting her money on a certainty*, will not hesitate to prepare and to engage upon a bloody conflict. The past is a sufficient indication of the future.

The immense arsenal of the Rhine and the Ruhr must therefore be transformed into a *co-operative* peace factory.

Economic internationalisation is our only guarantee.

Under the authority and jurisdiction of the Reich, such an operation would be impossible, being at the mercy of Customs tariffs and legislative texts dictated by the Konzerns which would stultify participation in precisely those industries which we wish to free from their domination.

The Rhine and the Ruhr, therefore, must be removed

from the sovereignty of the Reich, even under a disguised form.

Do not let us be led astray by the fiction of *absolute* independence of a Rhenish-Westphalia guaranteed collectively by all the Powers. This solution, suggested even by certain Frenchmen, would be a dangerous fiction for the whole world. Left to herself Rhenish-Westphalia would be a prey to every kind of intrigue and covetous competition. She would be delivered up, economically and politically, to an implacable struggle of influences. If Germany won, we should be in danger. If we won, we should be a danger, or at least considered as such.

In either case, the peace of the world would be threatened as well as our own peace.

Therefore political internationalisation as well as economical (the former to ensure the latter) is needed, and it is only possible under the ægis of the League of Nations.

Whether we like it or not, from whatever point of view we regard the problem of peace, we are driven to this conclusion.

Criticism has not been lacking, but no alternative has been proposed.

None of the numerous objections put forward has seemed to me insurmountable.

I set aside firmly those raised by the two extreme parties, both nationalist.

There are too many Germanophiles who become indignant at the thought of a « mutilation » of Germany and who cannot admit that Prussia — whose national industry from the earliest times to our day has been War — should be deprived of the wherewithal to pursue her traditional trade.

There are Frenchmen, rare in numbers, who believe that the permanent occupation of the Rhineland and the Ruhr by our troops is the only guarantee — that is to say : in order to sleep in peace we must remain afoot, always ready for war !

Such views are contrary to simple common sense.

But if we no more want a Franco-Belgian army of occupation in Rhenish-Westphalia than German sovereignty over that territory, how are we going to establish there an international army ?

The criticisms can be foreseen — « conflicts between various international contingents, between their leaders, and between the States that provide them, etc. »

All this is based on a false conception. It is not an army but an international *gendarmerie* that is needed. It would not be provided piecemeal by each State with its own staff : it would be composed of volunteers, the States interested merely paying into a common treasury their share of the cost. In order to remove all misgivings the maximum proportion of volunteers from each State would be fixed in advance. The system of the Foreign Legion gives excellent results ; the international Macedonian gendarmerie worked perfectly. There is therefore no reason why an organisation of the same kind should not succeed, *if its success is seriously sought.*

The administrative problem is more difficult. Here again there seems to be a misunderstanding. We do not propose to *administer* Rhenish-Westphalia by the League of Nations but only to *control* it in the measure strictly necessary to world peace.

In brief, the regime would resemble that of a very liberal *protectorate*. The League of Nations would guarantee the inhabitants of the Rhineland and the Ruhr complete security against any attack from any source whatever. In exchange it would reserve to itself the control

of their foreign relations and of any internal legislative measure calculated to compromise the economic internationalisation of the great *key industries* of the country.

Apart from these questions, the Rheno-Westphalians would organise their own system of self-government under reserve of constitutional precautions easy to imagine and ensuring to the representatives of the League of Nations the control of an entire disposal of the armed police forces.

The country would therefore administer itself. It would live protected from external complications and free of all burden of defence. It would have the honour and *advantage* of being the seat of an immense international organisation. It would profit in the development of its natural resources by universal financial co-operations. Is it possible, is it credible that the Rhinelanders would decline to exchange joyfully the Prussian regime (*which was forced upon them only a century ago*) for a most enviable position ?

Much is said about « the free disposal of peoples ». This phrase needs explanation. Could a French township, on the pretext of free disposal, demand more than its internal autonomy ? Could a county put forward similar pretensions ? Whether we like it or not, there is a law of majorities to which a minority must bow. Naturally this does not signify bowing to violence or tyranny; but, in the interest of all, certain sacrifices, certain limitations of independence, have to be accepted. Every society is founded on this principle, which has often been defined as follows: « The maximum freedom compatible with the interests of the greatest number. »

In the case in point, it appears clearly that the general interest coincides with that of the Rheno-Westphalians themselves. They most certainly will not be the last to perceive this.

NANTES

Imprimerie du Commerce

12, Rue Santeuil
